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SIMCITY

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WELCOME TO
FirstLook

Phew! February was one heck of a busy month for new game reveals. We saw Bungie officially unveil their next big new sci-fi universe *Destiny*, and Sony decided to shock to the world by revealing the PlayStation 4 for seemingly no reason other than to catch Microsoft with their pants down. These stories were so big that it would've been remiss if we didn't get them into this glorious magazine somewhere so, dangerously close to deadline we put together a detailed preview of Bungie's *Destiny*, but we collected all the information released by Sony about the long-awaited PlayStation 4 – no rumours here just cold, hard facts.

In addition to this hot off the presses madness, we also have lengthy preview of *SimCity*, a hefty hands-on with *GRID 2* and we find out what Insomniac Games has been up to after concluding the excellent *Resistance* series for PS3. Bravo February, March sure has a lot to live up to.

Happy Reading!

Andy Griffiths, Editor
FIRSTLOOK@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

Still picking over some delectable pre-orders…
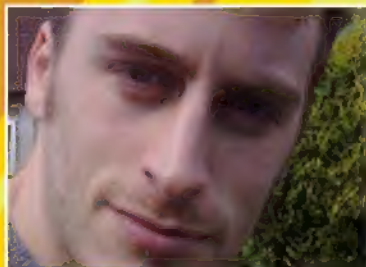
Andy Griffiths
Giving Boris a run for his money...

Don't miss!
This month's top highlights!

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PLAYSTATION 4 REVEALED

DON'T MISS NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE!

Did you know that a new issue of FirstLook is released every month, and by subscribing you'll be one of the first to read it?

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DESTINY

SAY HALO TO BUNGIE'S BABY

Usually when a new game has its big unveiling one would expect to see some screenshots and maybe some footage to get potential fans excited but *Destiny* had none of that. Bungie's 'big reveal' simply had concept art and trailers with different talking heads waxing lyrical about the next game from the studio that gave the world *Halo*. That isn't to say we didn't find out a lot though, like the facts that the "connected class-based shooter" would involve a persistent online world with players creating their own characters or that there won't be a need to fork out a monthly fee to play *Destiny* even though a lot of its gameplay elements sound very MMO-like.

If anything Bungie seem to be doing all they can to avoid the Massively Multiplay Online label, even though *Destiny* will boast town-like hubs where players can team up, compare gear and take part in live events, but seeing as this game is trying to appeal to console audiences maybe Activision doesn't want to scare off the casual crowd.

The story sounds typically Bungie too, with remnants of humanity exploring the solar system after being saved from a near-extinction level event by a mystical being known as 'The Traveller'.

This reveal posed as many new questions as it answered, but it's good to have an inclination of what Bungie are up to next. ∎

STAR TREK

AN ATTRACTIVE ENTERPRISE

If *Aliens: Colonial Marines* taught us anything it's that gamers should still be wary of movie tie-ins. And in that vein we're peppering this preview with just the right amount of, er, salt to say that Digital Extremes' tie-in with J.J. Abrams next big *Star Trek* movie seems to be shaping up okay.

This third person shooter's co-op campaign sees two players embodying Spock and Kirk as they attempt to fight against the bloodlust of popular villain, Gorn. Far removed from the plot of *Into the Darkness* then, with the campaign allowing players to explore the Enterprise at their own place, marvelling at the majestic brilliance of the bridge one moment and moving onto more neglected areas like the observation lounge and officers' quarters the next.

For *Star Trek* fans that has to be something worth getting excited about and developer Digital Extremes are a proven studio, having recently put out the excellent *Darkness II*. We aren't saying this movie game will give *Half-Life* a run for its money, but it should at least have some cool moments. ■
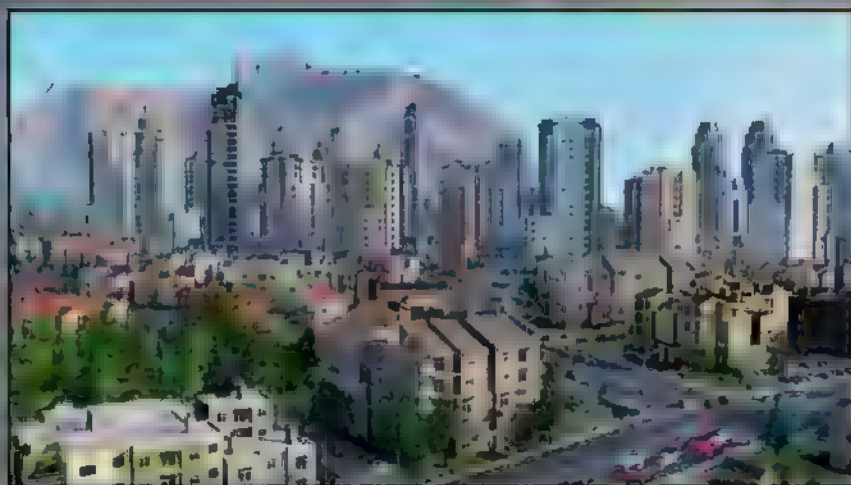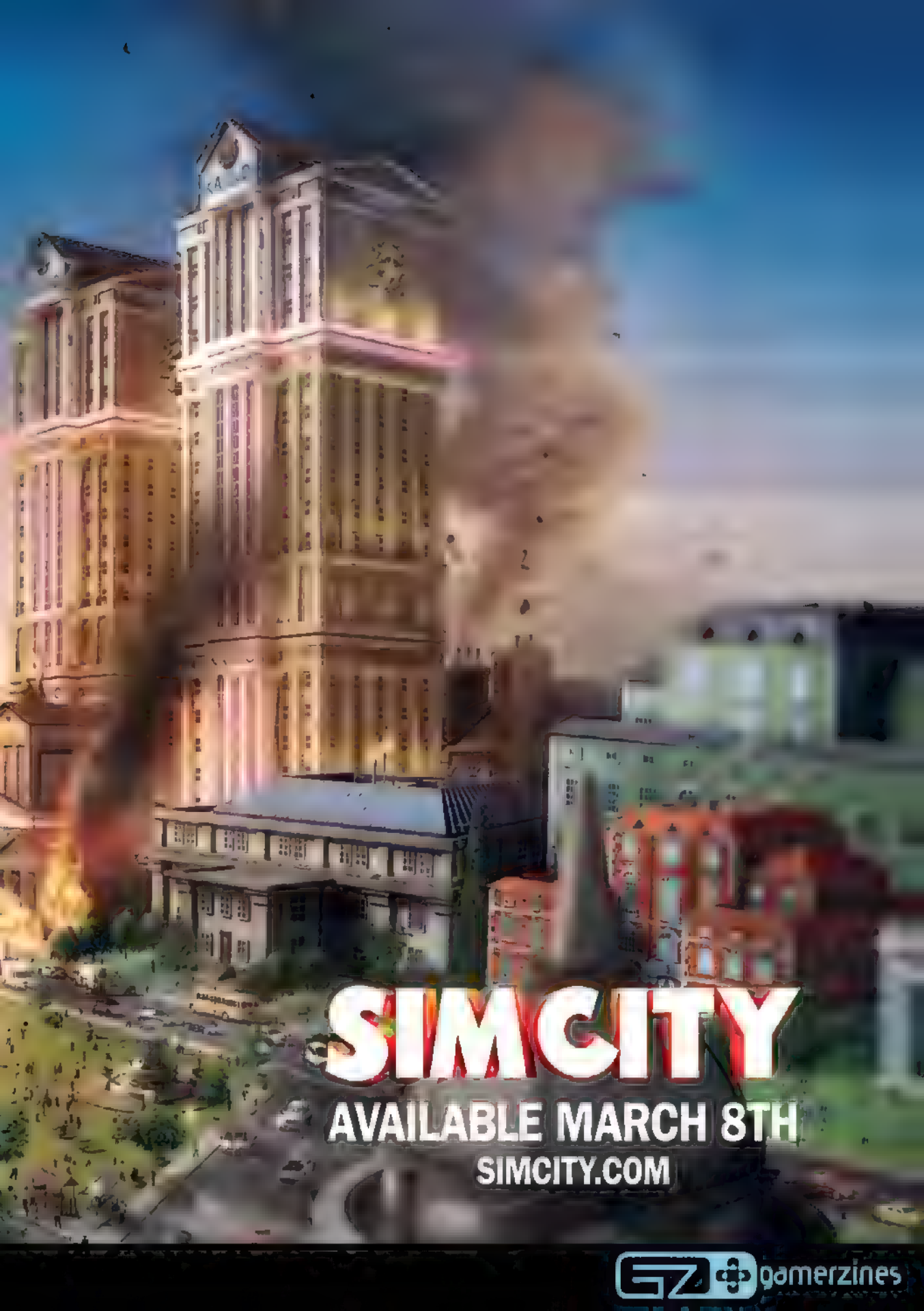
THE LAST OF US
Naughty Dog moves into Uncharted Territory

Some developers are happy to stay in their comfort zone pumping out similar games time and time again, whereas others look to flex their creative muscle whenever they can, happily embracing the challenge of producing something new at seemingly every opportunity. Naughty Dog definitely belongs in the latter camp as *The Last of Us* seems like an entirely different experience to the bright and breezy *Uncharted* series.

This survival horror experience has been delayed until June, but that hasn't dampened our anticipation for its release. The premise of a grizzled survivor escorting a teenager through a post-apocalyptic world certainly shares a lot in common with John Hillcoat's *The Road* and Naughty Dog seem to be going for a similarly bleak and mature approach, with uncompromising violence and constant challenges to player morality.

PUB: SONY
DEV. NAUGHTY DOG
PLATFORM: P
ETA: JUNE 14 H
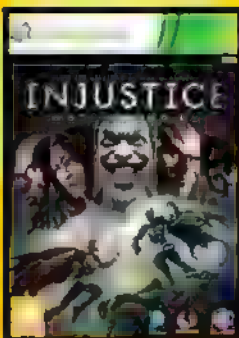
INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US

PUB: WARNER BROS
PLATFORM: XBOX 360 PS3
ETA. APRIL 19TH

Who would win in a fight between Superman and Batman? Better yet, what would happen if these two heroic titans found themselves on the opposing sides of a philosophical struggle on how best to protect humanity from its own inevitable destruction? This is the next beat-'em-up from the makers of *Mortal Kombat*, NetherRealm Studios, but it's the intriguing story setup that has us so pumped.

STARCRAFT II: HEART OF THE SWARM

PUB: ACTIVISION BLIZZARD
DEV. BLIZZARD
PLATFORM:
ETA: M

The first expansion to *StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty* wisely focuses on the insecto'd Zerg and Queen of the Blades. Jim Raynor's old squeeze is more maniacal than ever and we're expecting this old school RTS to focus heavily on her internal conflict between what she has become and what she was. Expect easy-to-grasp RTS gameplay and the best cutscenes in the business.
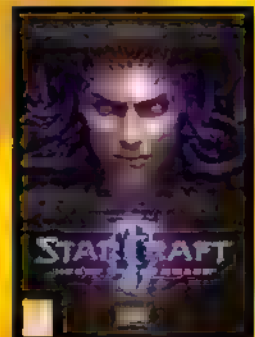
BIOSHOCK INFINITE

We'll be honest, we're going to miss *BioShock*'s Rapture, but *Infinite*'s city in the clouds Columbia seems almost as interesting, with its neoclassical buildings, air balloons and groovy Skytrain. Here's hoping exploring this airy wonderland will be just as fun as its underwater cousin. One more thing, we'll miss those Big Daddies as well…

GEARS OF WAR: JUDGMENT

With Microsoft focusing almost all their energy on the next generation of consoles, this may be one of the Xbox 360's last exclusive titles, but that doesn't mean People Can Fly and Epic Games are going to do the platform a disservice. This prequel stars Baird, and we hope it'll show that *Gears of War* still has some interesting places to go.

GOD OF WAR: ASCENSION

Sony have decided to bundle early access to *The Last of Us* demo with every copy of *God of War: Ascension*. Now this dubious honor has a lot of history, going way back to *Zone of Enders* being propped up by the promise of a *Metal Gear Solid 2* demo. Here's hoping this prequel to *God of War* has enough quality to stand out on its own merits.

DEFIANCE

The more we hear about Trion World's radical multi format shooter MMO, the more excited we get about the potential of not only the game's multiplayer appeal, but also the potential of this new sci-fi universe which sees Earth irreversibly colonised by a host of alien races. Expect *Defiance* to pleasantly surprise a lot of gamers.

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

A lot of gamers got butt hurt this month when Rockstar announced that *GTA V* was being delayed in order to allow the game to be polished up. Yes, it's a little frustrating that we all have to wait a bit longer for the series return, but surely we want *GTA V* to be the best it can be? Take all the time you need Rockstar.

gamerzines

SIMCITY

HANDS-ON

PUB: EA
DEV: MAXIS
LAST GAME: SIMS 3: PETS
PLATFORMS: PC
ETA: MARCH 8TH

Six hours with Maxis' long-awaited reboot

Maxis are the masters of user interface design. That may sound like a small nail for any developer to hang their hat on, but think about the importance of it for just a second – UI is the basis of how a player interacts with a game on the most fundamental level, and with a release as complex and varied as *SimCity* it would be easy for charts, economies and building options to quickly spiral out of control, as the player is completely overwhelmed by the complexity of the metropolis they've constructed. Designating different zones, managing crime rates, finely mapping out roads, deciding a specialisation, placing down sewage works, weighing up different energy supplies, and controlling tax rates for high, medium and low earners may

sound like the kind of stress which would cause hypertension in even the most calculating of Mayors, but when making these decisions in *SimCity* you don't feel stressed. Instead there's a mixture of whimsy and wonderment as you almost effortlessly snap together curved roads, switch on data layers to see various coloured orbs zoom around your road network and watch predefined zones fill up as different buildings get erected.

SimCity just works, thanks not only to the easy-to-grasp nature of the game's design, but also the sublime ease of which you can navigate the menu interface. The soft-focus visual style gives city management more of a toy box feel than previous *SimCitys*, but scratch just a little underneath this colourful Pixar-inspired veneer, and
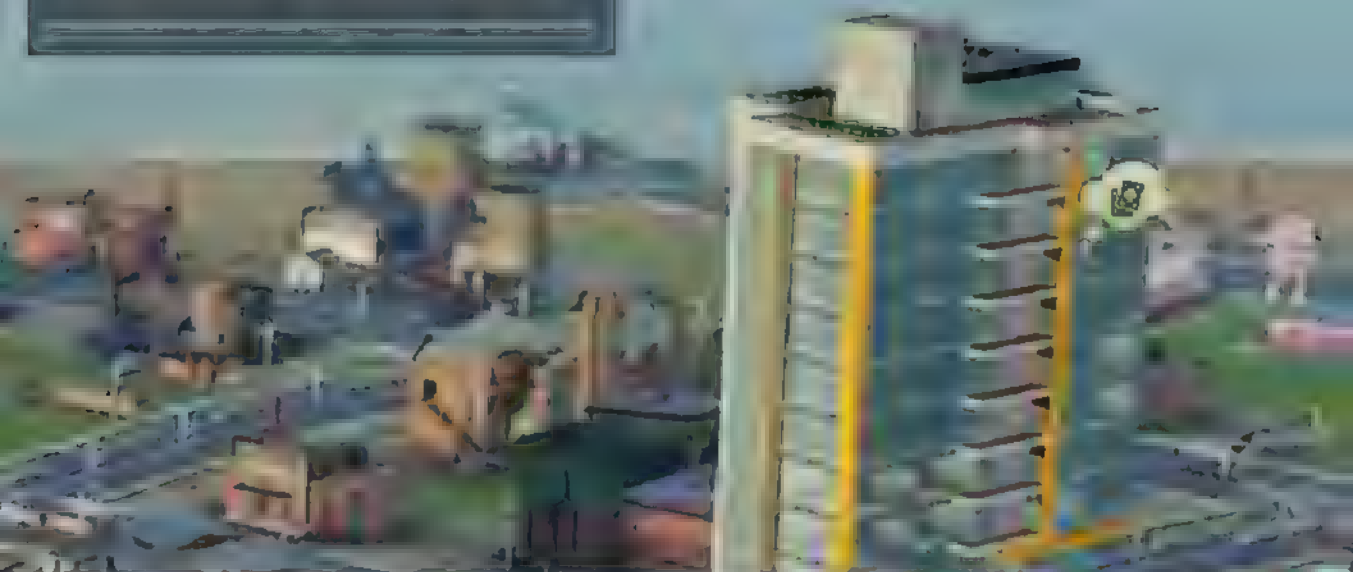
you'll find a simulation which is just as hardcore as before – only with the fiddly bits like placing down sewage piping and electricity lines taken out. Now you simply place down power plants and sewage works where you wish and both electricity and crap blobs are auto-routed, via the road network, to their destinations

This monumental time saver makes establishing cities much less of a challenge, and places greater emphasis on the importance on infrastructure. Our first city, affectionately dubbed 'Sleepytown', made London's urban maze seem well thought-out, with tarmac thoroughfares slicing off in all directions limiting the space of potential expansion in either industrial, commercial or residential zones. This

was the quickest way to condemn our city to the detestable label of being the 'ideal home for low earners'.

SimCity 2012 doesn't boast a density meter like its previous iterations, instead buildings automatically sprout into more expensive or bigger forms if the land around it is well-valued, and the road network near it supports high capacity traffic.

Ease of use is a term that suits this incarnation of *SimCity* perfectly, as even placing roads is supported by optional guide lines, so you can make the most of the space available merely by keeping to the dotted spacings. You can still place roads wherever you want, but now there are rectangular, circular and curved options to play around with. It's a similar system to the one employed in riva
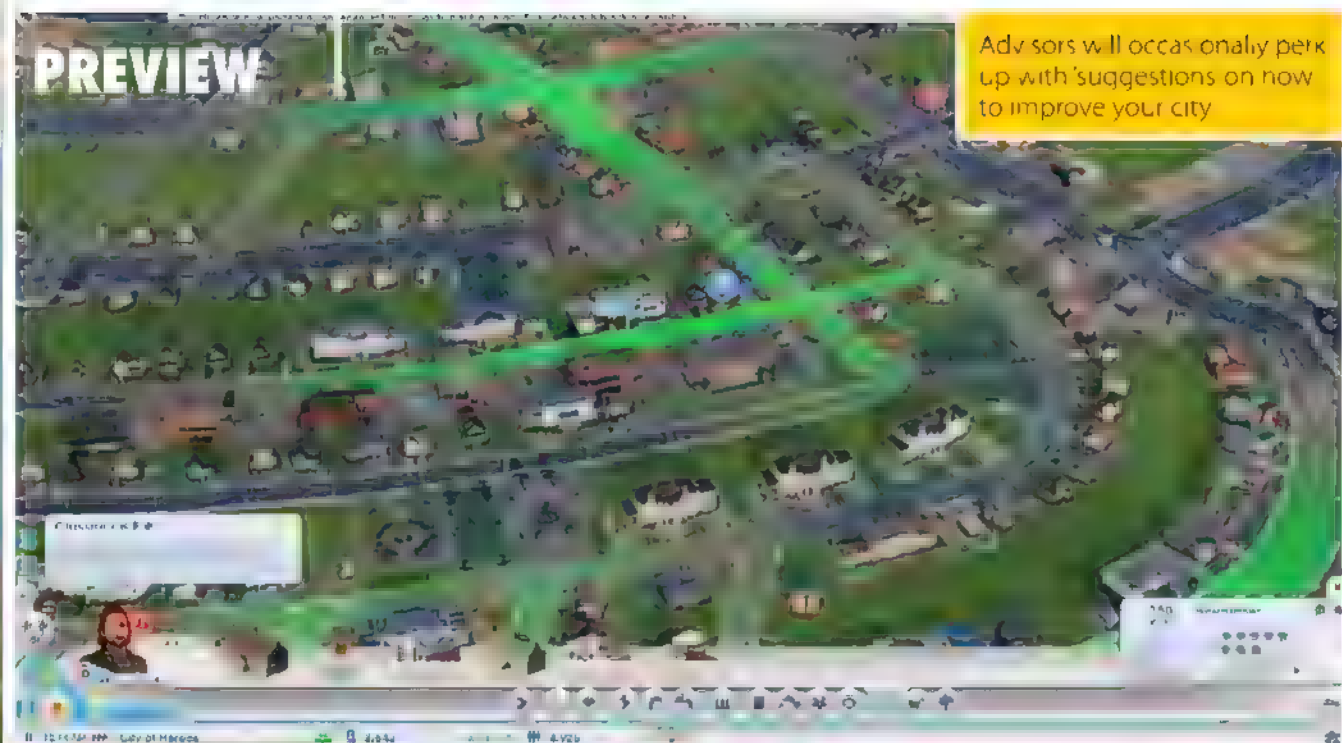
Landmark buildings cost a lot of Simoleons, but they will draw in the tourists.

management sim *Cities XL*, but here it's much easier and more satisfying to use. The result of all this ergonomic gameplay design does mean that transforming your piece of randomised green-space – occasionally boasting railway lines, coastline and natural resources – into an urban centre can happen rather quickly. The playable area for each city is noticeably smaller than in previous games, but this is where multi-city gameplay comes in.

Cities are no longer separated from the rest of the world, instead they're joined by neighbouring sites ripe for urban expansion. These can either be snatched up by the player or delegated to one of their friends online, but the point of this inclusion is that resources, services, utilities and cash can be easily traded between each location on a month-to-month basis, allowing players to specialise cities more than they ever have done before. Old givens like establishing

Just watching the simulation play out is a joy, especially when a new, carefully chosen tax structure leads to your different zones going through a period of prosperity

healthcare centres, police outposts, power and sewage networks are no longer necessary when forming a city, as you can simply buy up any respective spare capacity offered up by your neighbours to free up room

> "The playable area for each city is smaller than in previous games, but this is where multi-city gameplay comes in"

to build more schools, universities or giant expo halls for that monster truck convention you've always wanted to host – go on, admit it. You'd love it.

This addition gives the option for players to progress their city down specific paths associated with tourism, natural resource extraction, manufacturing goods and education. Even real-world landmarks have been chucked into the building options list, ranging from the Empire State Building (costing around 200,000 Simoleons) to the humble Dutch windmill. Upgrading your City Hall with new ministry buildings unlocks these paths, and there is the option to go for more than one – if funds are plush. The modular nature of most of SimCity's buildings means that you no longer have to double up if you want to increase their influence. If your firehouse needs to spread its coverage there's the option to add a pole and more trucks to increase response time.

"I'M THE BOSS"

Back to specialisation, though. We went for the quick fix, long-term damage gambling route, starting with cheesy, ❯

Rather than having lots of different graphs, all data is mapped onto the city itself via a 30 different data layers which can be toggled on and off at your leisure

double-storey casinos lining a particularly dodgy corner of our second city, 'Metropolis of the Damned'. After our good time houses made enough dosh, an icon appeared over our most-lavish casino. We clicked it and an untrustworthy suit-wearer appeared recommending we build a gambling HQ. There wasn't the option to design our own casinos, but the ability to add modules onto existing building templates proved surprisingly enjoyable, with the ability to place down glitzy signs, add additional stories and suspect-looking poker parlours.

After appeasing the gambling gods with our skyscraper-sized tribute, further casino archetypes became available: a cheap glitzy modern variety, a surprisingly expensive sci-fi one, and the most expensive, neo-classical option. We went for the sci-fi option, which is probably best described as what you'd imagine a casino to look like if it was designed by Laser Quest in the 1980s. We bolstered the regular spec with a few more gambling houses, and carefully placed down Stratosphere-looking towers – you know for the kids…

> ## "The sci-fi option's casino looks like it was designed by Laser Quest in the 1980s"

Ambitiously, we decided to aim our city squarely at the high-earning gambling types by happily bulldozing the industrial sector of town and raising taxes for medium and high earners – you know, like any foolhardy mayor lusting for riches would.

Alas, our city was soon locked in a depression of its own making – we'd like to blame global factors – which

Whenever you do something to raise Sim morale, like placing a park or upgrade the City Hall raising property prices, smiley faces pop up all over the city

unfortunately it didn't recover from. In desperation we unleashed a giant fire-spewing red and gold lizard, one of SimCity's many disasters, onto the suffering populace which unsurprisingly eased our pain.

Even though SimCity has a new colourful and accessible wrapper, if you push the sim too far it will quite happily bite you in the bum, but it's no longer for silly things like not connecting up electrical lines properly -- now it's purely down to your own maniacal hubris which is kind of the way it should always have been.

During all this single-player gameplay we weren't bugged by annoying pop-ups alerting us to what our 'friends' were up to or how the real-time global commodity prices were fluctuating across the SimCity network. Thankfully, Maxis understands the sanctity of the single-player experience more so than any other developer, so even though they've been talking up their

Battlelog-inspired system it isn't as egregious as you'd think.

Sure there are achievements, global leaderboards and time-sensitive objectives posted to the game's network, but if you just want to build cities then that's possible and you'll have a blast doing it.

After spending six hours with SimCity we came away feeling very impressed with Maxis' efforts. During the day we got through multiple pop-up tutorials, some co-op multiplayer, built multiple cities and fooled around with the toolset, yet even with hardly any breaks we still ended the day wanting more.

Maxis' next big release sucked us in from the moment we sat down, thanks to its alluring visuals, easy interface and carefree atmosphere. SimCity has evolved and needless to say we're hankering for more of it. ∎
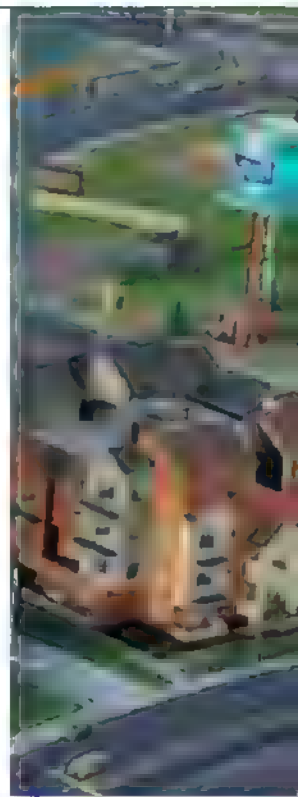
FirstLook

GRID 2

PUB: CODEMASTERS
DEV: IN-HOUSE
LAST GAME: DIRT: SHOWDOWN
PLATFORMS: XBOX 360, PS3, PC
ETA: MAY 31ST

Codemasters aim for the big time

Every racing game fan should be excited about GRID 2. Codemasters racing pedigree is undeniable and the first GRID is arguable their finest work, succeeding in melding urban racing, drift and open-wheel track events in an enjoyable 'run your own team' mould. Yet for two specific reasons, the removal of the all-important cockpit view and the inclusion of dynamically changing city tracks, anticipation has fallen flat

Call it a miscommunication or whatever you want, but the good news is that the core GRID gameplay is still here, albeit in a more mainstream and glossier mould, centred around starring in and helping to establish a fictional championship dubbed, the World Racing Series. This new championship frames the single-player narrative with players cast as a talented yet unproven driver whose exploits are key to the success of this new series gaining worldwide acclaim. A championship where drivers from various disciplines – including oval, open-wheel, tin-top ❯

"The good news is that the *GRID* you know is still here, albeit in a more mainstream and glossier mould"

GRID 2's prettier than its predecessor, with more special effects and a longer draw distance

and drift – get together and compete to discover who is really the finest driver in all of motorsport. As premises go, GRID 2's is very enticing, with series creator Patrick Callaghan getting personally involved with the player's ascension up the rankings. If you want the whole ideology of the WSR summed up, think Formula One if it was run by the people behind the X-Games and you aren't too far off.

Across multiple seasons players will see the championship evolve as it moves from North America to Europe and finally Asia, with events, drivers and locales corresponding with each continent you play in.

This is a similar progression curve to the original GRID, with players buying cars and unlocking events in a sequential fashion, only now this growth is supported by media interaction communicated via fame and social networks. As you progress through the season-by-season narrative, rivalries between region champions will be established, each of whom have their own driving style, personality and liveries. Codemasters unfortunately wouldn't answer any
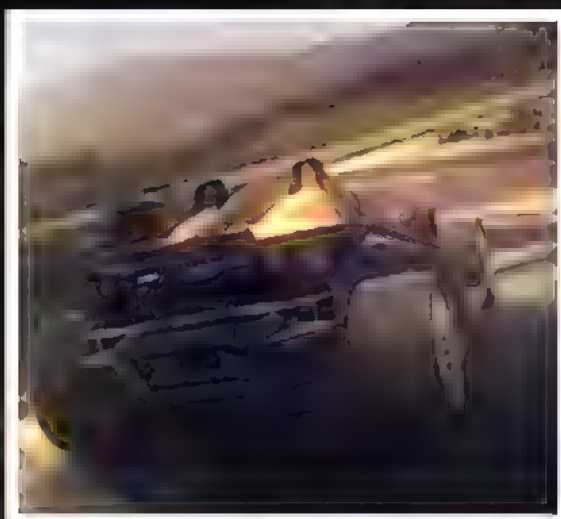
ESPN PRIMETIME

Codemasters will communicate the WSR's growing world prominence in GRID 2's career mode by showing the player emails, tweets and videos from ESPN talking about on-track events. We were shown a live-action cut-scene starring Kevin Connors and Toby Moody talking about the potential of the WSR taking the world stage by storm, with more promised throughout the campaign, but they felt out of place. ESPN is the home of more traditional sports like American Football and Basketball, with their motor racing coverage being average at best. Networks like Motors TV or SPEED would have been more convincing choices.

Senior Producer

A lot of *GRID*'s appeal was based around simulating the tertiary world of modern-day motorsport, so things like pleasing sponsors, choosing the right car for competitions and choosing a team-mate. Are those things going to be in the game at all?

Those things that you talk about, some of them are definitely in the game. Aspects like sponsorship are still present and configuring your car is there. Those things we've kept and pushed further, so we will definitely continue in this direction.

With regards to team-mates, is that functionality in there?

I can't tell you at the moment.

***GRID* emulated a lot of real-life motorsport events and series without actually having the respective licenses, Le Mans was the notable exception to that, how much can you talk about what licenses you have? The WSR combines all of motorsport into one central event, but will you have specific types of events in there like karting, endurance etc?**

The game is about travelling all over the world, and each club will have a different style of racing attached to it. We're clearly emulating quite a lot of different racing disciplines in the game. If you see what we did for the pre-order in America, we're giving away the Indy track along with an Indy car, but that tells you that this kind of thing is present in some ways in the game.

Another thing that Codemasters has attracted a lot of flack for in the public domain is the LiveRoutes mechanic, which changes an event's track layout lap to lap. How will that work?

What we call LiveRoutes is really challenging tech, and it's something we're quite excited about. Basically, when you get into certain city events, the route will change when you're in the city dynamically. What we do when we make the cities is create a network of multiple routes, and in this mode we change those routes on the fly. You can go around the city for potentially hours and hours, and when we did the first focus tests, the feedback has been amazing as people can play for a really long time without the event feeling repetitive. The big advantage is going to be online, as you can imagine doing endurance laps with your mates, and on dynamic you can set it for X amount of time and you can just go for it, and you always have something new waiting around the corner.

questions on if real world drivers fil these spots, a la *DiRT 2*, but it would be absolutely bonkers if the developer didn't use their considerable leverage to bag a few well known names from F1. After all, if NASCAR's Danica Patrick can have an appearance in *Sonic & All Stars Racing Transformed*, surely Codemasters can open a few doors and get Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button in *GRID 2*? We can only hope.

The team management element which was so crucial to *GRID*'s appeal also seems to be glossed over. Players will be able to toy around with their livery by selecting colour schemes and sponsors, but the developers wouldn't be drawn on if the ability to choose a team-mate returns.

The aspect that sold us on this WSR concept was the nature of how Codemasters communicate its growing relevance. During the first season races are rather low-key affairs, with just safety barriers and the odd dog walker stopping by to watch races, but as the years roll on events seem more like low-level carnivals ❯

So far, four tiers of car have been confirmed for *GRID 2*, ranging from the humble BMW E30 M3 to the ear-drum annihilating Pagan. Huayra!
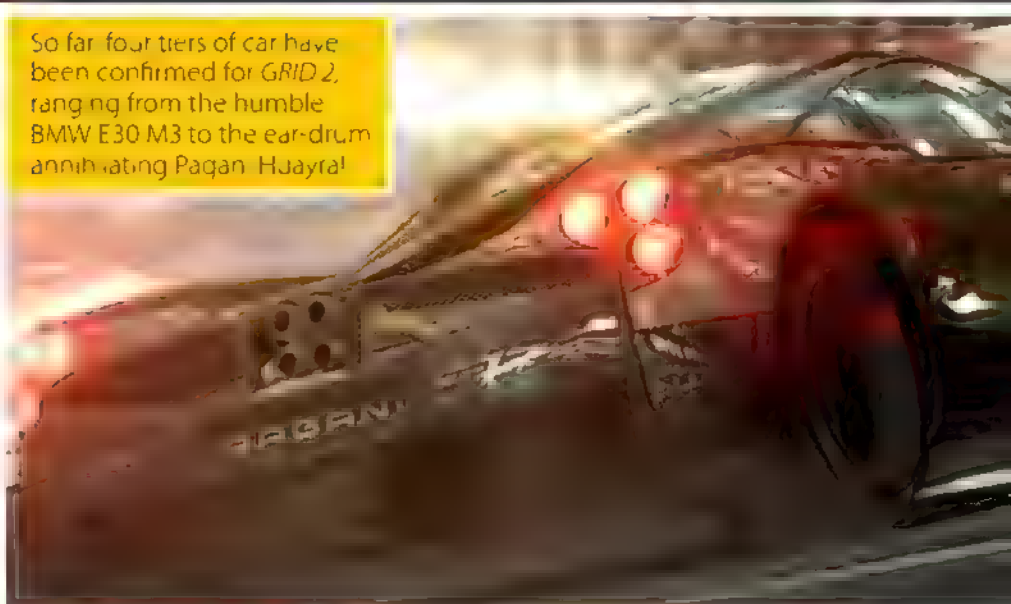
with fans lining every centimetre of the track in big grandstands, with lots of sponsor logos, massive neon signs and fireworks going off during events.

Codemasters approach is certainly the flashiest of all the racing developers, you just need to look at their menu design for proof of that, and in *GRID 2* it seems as though the team's taking those elements and dialling them up even further.

Seeing as WSR seems to be its own fully fledged series, we have our doubts that Codemasters are going for that pan-series appeal that the original *GRID* had, but then we could be wrong. We asked the UK developer about what licenses they

have in their wheelhouse, but again they wouldn't be drawn on the details. It would be a massive shame if the *Le Mans 24 hours* didn't return in some fashion, especially as a lot of real life drivers tend to moonlight in other disciplines during the off season, so there would be room for it.

Codemasters are certainly pushing the *GRID* concept into new areas, but the most important element, the actual racing, remains just as entertaining. We went hands-on with two different events, an open wheel race around Austria's A1 Ring and an elimination event around the streets of Chicago involving Dodge Challengers, Chevrolet Camero SS', and Nissan 370Zs. As you would expect, the production cars were much more unwieldy than their track cousins, with the open-wheel choices restricted to the BAC Mono, Ariel Atom 3 and the KTM X-Bow R.

Car handling feels very much like the previous *GRID*, with players able to introduce oversteer to power out of corners faster and bump wheels with other cars without too much ➤

Obviously this mechanic would work extremely well with city events, but on established circuits like Brands Hatch the layout won't change, right?
Specific tracks will stay the same as the real-life layout. This mode has been specifically designed for the cities.

The original *GRID* boasts the same globetrotting mentality as the sequel, with players tackling drift, urban races and circuit races in different continents. Why do you need the WSR concept to unify that, why not just stick with *GRID*'s original multi-series approach?
We wanted to give a story to the game. I think *GRID 1* was excellent, but with *GRID 2* we wanted to push what we had done to something new and something more unified. There is still that same aspect as competing through all different types of game modes and clubs, though. All of the variety from *GRID 1* to *GRID 2* is still there, we're just combining this into a more unified story around the WSR.

The lack of a cockpit view in *GRID 2*, even though it was in original *GRID*, has caused a lot of controversy among fans. What was it like to be in-house for that backlash?
The thing is that was a really big decision for us. It allows us to be able to push other things in the game, like with the visuals. We've been able to extend point-to-point events, we've been able to add more cars to the track, and that's really pushing things forward. It's a good decision for the game and we don't regret it.

You'd much rather use the system resources usually utilised for rendering in-car views for doing other things...
Yeah, and we have complete respect for those that use a cockpit cam, but we need to look at the whole aspect of the game. If we just had to do this game for PC we obviously would have a cockpit cam, but we only have so much power to play with [referring to consoles]. We'd prefer to focus on the race experience, and that unfortunately lead us to make some difficult decisions regarding the cockpit cam.

This is the last big racing game hurrah for the current generation of consoles. Do you have any trepidation about that or do you think it's an exciting thing?
Of course I think it's really exciting. We're coming to the end of the generation, we want to make this game best in class and we're really pushing things to the next level.

"At times it was entertaining to just watch the AI battle it out; switching lanes, going wide and spinning out"

GRID 2 does have a fully featured replay system with different camera angles and the like. There doesn't seem to be an option to switch views to different cars, though

impact. Mechanical damage was switched off for the hands-on session, so we could ram into other cars and take victory without suffering any real consequences – aside from the occasional missing door and bumper. There were 11 other racers involved in each event and at times it was entertaining to just watch the AI battle it out; switching lanes, going wide and spinning out.

The checkpoint event in Chicago was a little bit tougher. The slim streets with their hard 90-degree turns and tyre-protected traffic islands resulted in our car wiping out on more than one occasion, but we still had a lot of fun performing drifts around corners to get to checkpoints before the timer ran out. The lack of actual competitive racing cars did bemuse us a little during the demo, as the car selection at the moment seems more akin to the roster you'd find in a Need for Speed release rather than a motorsport game, but then all Codemasters has to do is chuck in a few touring cars, endurance cars, Formula Fords and F3000 cars and then we'd be onboard. We really don't think that we're asking for much, and these inclusions would help to win over the sure-to-be-conflicted sim-loving crowd.

All in all, GRID 2 seems like an ambitious and daring reimagining of the first game. All of the component parts are here including the contact-heavy racing, the varied disciplines and the appealing presentation, but now it's wrapped in this unified, slightly American, WSR wrapper. Whether it all pays off remains to be seen, but nobody can say that Codemasters are playing it safe with this sequel. ■

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IT'S NEVER JUST A GAME

FUSE
HANDS-ON

Comprehensive co-op

The cover-based shooter sub-genre hasn't exactly been a hive of creativity over the past few years. Sure there have been some notable entries that have tried to accomplish new things, like *Vanquish* and *Binary Domain*, but for every great release there tend to be efforts like *Inversion* which set expectations for the next cover shooter down to absolute zero. *FUSE* has definitely been a bit of victim of this recent trend, with many gamers dismissing Insomniac's multi-platform debut as 'characterless' or 'generic', but frankly these ill-considered observations couldn't be further from the truth.

Insomniac Games is actually trying to do new things with the humble cover shooter, by placing an emphasis on tactics, co-operative teamplay and protagonists that actually have a sense of humour. *FUSE* stars Overstrike 9, a team of four talkative mercenaries, each boasting their own special abilities and weapons with Insomniac's trademark imaginative weapon design, as they attempt to take down a shadowy government organisation wielding advanced alien tech.

Interestingly, each of these characters and their abilities falls into traditional MMORPG character types, with the chunky Dalton functioning like an attention-drawing Tank bolstered with his shield projector weapon, leaving the sniper Jacob and assault class warrior Naya to flank enemies and take them ❯

Dalton's Magshield is actually made of liquid, and you're able to fire through it at enemies to accrue extra XP

FUSE certainly appears prettier than Insomniac's other shooters

out. The final inclusion is Izzy who despite being dubbed a Healer can neutralise enemy numbers en masse for a short time – in addition to replenishing a teammates' HP. The tactical depth of these archetypes and their suitability to four-player online or local co-op is obvious, but to dial up *FUSE*'s attraction to those who love single-player, Insomniac has introduced the Leap mechanic.

> "Seeing giblets fly and heads popping off torsos is simply glee-enducing"

During the campaign the four starring characters will always be in tandem, but in a twist you can switch between each one on the fly. So say you're facing a giant mech boss as Dalton with your Magshield weapon drawing mass fire, but you can't fire back. In this scenario you

Some cover shooter tropes, like turret sequences are unavoidable

could switch to Naya who could use her cloaking device to head around the boss for a stealth kill or you could try and move Jacob into a position where he can utilise his electronic crossbow to maximum effect – while the AI holds the Tank in his important protective position.

This formula is unique in gaming, with only Gearbox's *Brothers in Arms* series coming close, but *FUSE*'s shooting still feels enjoyable with a similarly satisfying weight to *Resistance*. Seeing giblets fly and heads popping off torsos is simply glee-enducing.

We got a hefty helping of how this high-octane strategy operates in the game's Echelon mode, which is essentially a wave-based survival mode but with random, alternating objectives over 12 different stages. One moment you'll be trying to take down a surprisingly nimble boss, while the next you'll be trying to keep a VIP safe. During our hands-on we barely scraped through to the fifth stage

on the Raven Facility map, and the difficulty at times was crushingly tough. The addition of random item drops in the guise of instantly tempting gold bars and money bags to buy new equipment helped to nullify the blow of sudden failure somewhat, as did the UI reminders regarding constant XP accumulation for kills. The fact that each character's progression is persistent across the campaign and co-operative multiplayer is also a really nice touch.

FUSE feels like it's forging new ground in the increasingly dull cover shooter arena, and with Insomniac embracing multi-platforms for the first time (thanks to their shedding of the Sony shackles) Xbox 360 owners will be able to find out why PS3 gamers have been praising the makers of the *Resistance* and *Ratchet & Clank* for all these years. ∎

WILDSTAR
HANDS-ON

TWITTER

@Team_Wildstar
Today we've also revealed the Stalker class! Check out the video here: http://ow.ly/hG8o

@Massively
http://ow.ly/hG3R2 #wildstar @CRB_Scooter @Team_WildStar

@GamesBeat
MMOs "don't have to be serious to be epic" says WildStar writer http://wp.me/p1re2-2Ats

@ChrisHanel
I worked on this @Team_WildStar video! YOU ARE REQUIRED TO LOVE IT http://ow.ly/htDzf

@BDuganJr
If Pixar and Firefly had a baby, it'd be WildStar! - http://tinyurl.com/d3sfw4

@GamerZines
We played WildStar for three hours last week, here's what we thought about it! -http://t.co/FkX8kbUx

TWEET US @GAMERZINES

A new kind of MMORPG?

We're not sure what's going on with MMORPG developers at the moment, but it seems as though every studio is falling over themselves declaring that their work, and only their work, will fix this apparently struggling genre. With *World of Warcraft* still boasting 10 million subscribers, *World of Tanks* breaking concurrent number of players records and free-to-play games currently being added to *Steam* every week, we'd say that the MMO genre is in fact pretty healthy, but Carbine Studios disagrees.

We recently chatted with the game's Executive Producer Jeremy Gaffney and he told us that *WildStar* will change the way people think about MMORPGs. Do we believe him? Well, he has some pretty radical ideas.

WildStar is the product of a stable of experienced MMORPG-making veterans, having worked on every entry in the genre you can imagine including *City of Heroes*, *World of WarCraft* and *Tabula Rasa*. Simply put, they know their stuff and they're creating *WildStar* with three very important pillars in mind: an interesting new universe, freeform combat and the ability to progress up the levelling curve in multiple ways.

The first one they've got down pat, with the majority of the campaign taking place on the unspoilt paradise planet known as Nexus which was formerly home of the advanced

"Executive Producer Jeremy Gaffney told us that *WildStar* will change the way people think about MMORPGs"

WildStar boasts an imaginative array of monsters including this fella known as Metal Maw. He roams around the Deradune area, and requires 20 players to take him down
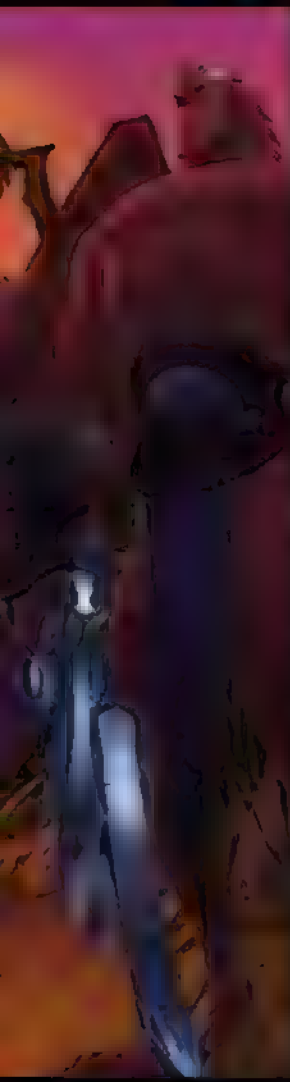
Eldan race, who have mysteriously disappeared from the universe. Two different factions, the Exiles and the Dominion, are poised to fight it out to take over this planet ripe with mysterious weapons and technology, wildlife and fauna and it's up to you which side you join.

So that's faction combat sorted, the next pillar is a bit harder to explain and that's what Carbine likes to call 'Freeform Combat'. Games like *TERA* have evolved MMORPG combat so that it's no longer about just targeting a creature and firing off every skill in your hot-bar, but *WildStar* takes that goal further. Now every attack has some range to it, even if you're a axe-swinging Warrior, and hits can register on multiple targets, so it's easy to chain multiple kills at your leisure. Chuck in the ability to dodge, with all monsters boasting their own attack patterns and you have combat which can rival even offline RPGs.

Progression in MMORPGs is usually pretty simple. You have quests to do, be it private or public, and most of the time adventuring actually feels like you're just doing errands for NPCs. *WildStar* certainly has the traditional 'go here kill X number of Y and return' kind of activities, but to mix this formula up the game regularly dynamically chucks out challenges into your HUD. Say a quest requires you to

> ## "The end of the campaign is unlike anything seen in sci-fi before"

hunt down some Mammoth-like 'Stonetusk Slayers', after putting a few to rest, a pop-up arrives in your HUD challenging you to kill more before the time limit runs out, and if you achieve it you'll earn more XP and maybe unlock the next challenge. This is a simple mechanic, but one that constantly enables you to deviate from traditional questing

The Path system also helps to mix things up further.

Whenever you create a character you have class and race choices as per usual, but you also have to choose from either Scientist, Settler, Soldier and Explorer paths. This choice not only unlocks more functionality in the world, for instance the Explorer can excavate paths underneath the world whereas the Soldier can access more combat missions, but it also emphasises social play with two paths working together gaining access to mission and story content which they would otherwise miss. All of these mechanisms are minor on their own, but when put together you have a theme park MMORPG which you can tailor to your own liking, if you don't like an activity don't worry as there are lots of other means to level.

In addition to these pillars, there's also an intriguing PvP mode where competing groups make their own battlegrounds dubbed 'Warplots',

with leaderboards associated with every group's construction. Additionally, Carbine has already committed to regular end-game content updates as well, specifically centred around the deceased Eldan race. How will they pull this off? We have absolutely no idea but during a recent hands-on event they did tease us by saying that the end of the campaign is unlike anything seen in sci-fi before.

Yep this Californian developer aren't afraid of blowing their own trumpet, but you know what? We like that. They're excited about the game they're making and they aren't afraid to steep more pressure on themselves by promising all they can. Hell if they deliver on at least half of what they're promising then *WildStar* will be one hell of a good MMORPG. We look forward to seeing more of *WildStar*. ▪
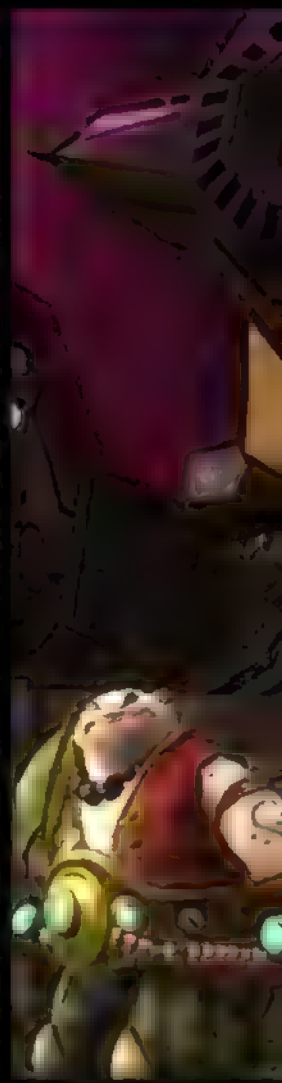
BIOSHOCK INFINITE

## NEW SHOTS OF 2013'S MOST DARING SHOOTER

Pigeonholing games into a specific genre can do them a real disservice. Take Irrational Games' spin-off/ successor to the original *BioShock* for instance, sure it has all the first-person shooter tropes of killing enemies with a multitude of different weapons and moving along a fairly linear path, but in terms of atmosphere and storytelling ambition, *Infinite* is about as far away from *Call of Duty* as you could possibly get.

And it's a good thing too, as *BioShock Infinite* to our minds is not only the most ambitious shooter of the year, it's also the most anticipated, which is why we decided to give these latest shots released by Irrational Games extra attention with a simple rundown of why you should be

excited about this release. Now we aren't going to rattle off what the opening couple of hours entails, like a lot of other mags out there, instead we're just going to give a brief overview of this exciting new universe.

> *"When players visit Columbia it very much seems like a functional paradise"*

Infinite is the third game in the *BioShock* series, but only the second entry put together by Ken Levine's Irrational Games. As you can tell from the screenshots, the setting has moved on from the watery
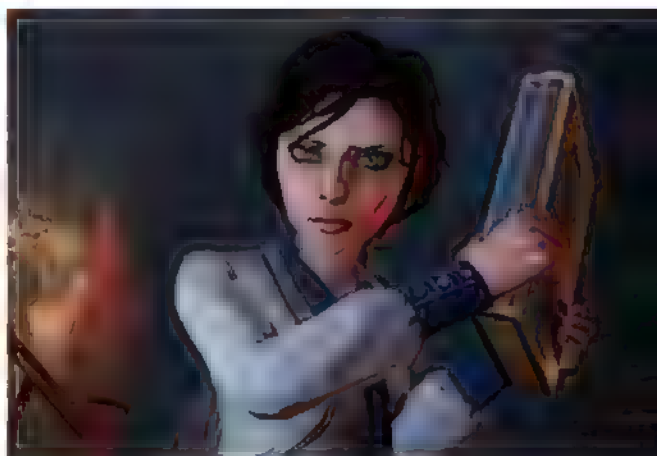
underground metropolis of Rapture to the floating city of Columbia. Despite being set in 1912, this floating populous boasts a lot of future tech like vending machines, a skytrain traversal system (which players can latch onto at will using a hook on their left arm), and inevitably enough Plasmids. Well, Infinite calls them 'Vigors' but they work in essentially the same way, allowing players to shoot enemies with their right hand while casting angry birds, fire and other nasties with their left. Anyone who played the original BioShock will almost immediately get to grips with this style of combat, but thanks to the setting Infinite still feels new and unexplored.

The emphasis on the word 'new' cannot be overstated as when players visit Columbia it very much seems like a functional paradise, but as you delve deeper into the plot the seeds of political malcontent become unmissable.

The protagonist Booker DeWitt is also different as he has his own murky path to contend with in addition to finding a young prison escapee Elizabeth, who possesses the ability to create portals to travel through time. Strange? Absolutely, but then we wouldn't have BioShock any other way. ∎

STARCRAFT II: HEART OF THE SWARM

BLIZZARD PLAY THE ACCESSIBILITY CARD

Multiplayer arenas don't get harder or more impenetrable than *StarCraft II*. Even though the RTS series' e-sports angle has always attracted a lot of coverage, Blizzard knows this hyper-competitive arena centred around clicks-per-second and optimum build queues means that a lot of casual fans are put off immediately by the thought of playing against others online. And we should know, as frankly we were one of them.

We would happily admit that we loved every single second of *Wings of Liberty*'s campaign, especially the gorgeous cut-scenes, but with regards to preparing us for actual competitive play, the mission design and gameplay challenge fell short. We could hold our own with the campaign's

Terran faction understandably, but switching to either the Protess or Zerg often led to confusion and quick defeat against fellow humans.

> *"The new multiplayer options are designed to engage and welcome new players"*

Thankfully Blizzard recognises this is a problem and they're looking to address it in the new *StarCraft II* expansion *Heart of the Swarm*, care of a litany of new multiplayer options which are designed to engage and welcome new players. It's a bit of an
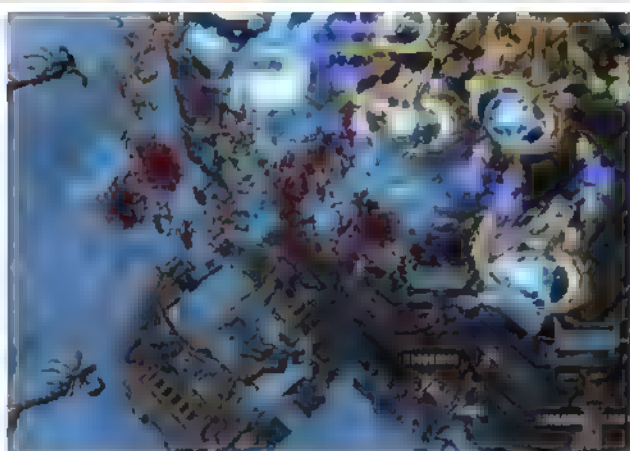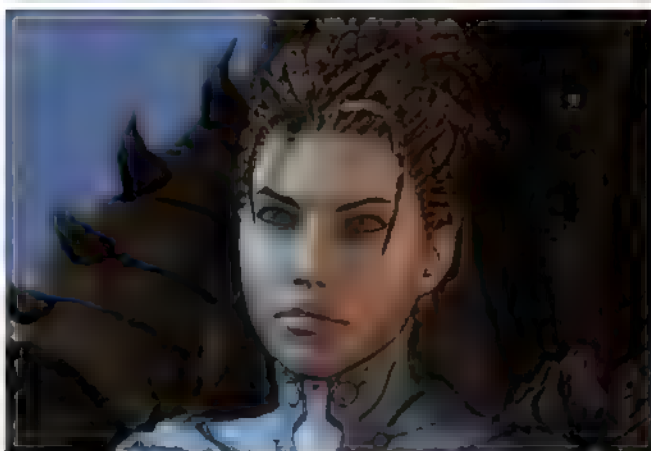
odd time to welcome newbies though, especially as to play this new expansion you'll need a copy of *Wings of Liberty*, but at least steps are being made in the right direction. Steps like a multi-stage tutorial mode which allows players to train in the ways of the Terran, Zerg and Protess, and the ability to take part in unranked matches against randoms without affecting your league ranking.

Furthermore, there's also the ability to skirmish against the AI in 1vs1, 2vs1, and 3vs1, allowing more time to experiment if a player chooses to, with multiplayer difficulty toggles to choose from. Blizzard has even implemented an evaluation mechanism into specific matches against the AI, so you know exactly where you stand when it comes to personal ability.

Will all these new inclusions (more detailed in the video above) help newcomers get accustomed to *StarCraft II*? Who knows, but good on Blizzard for trying. ■

PlayStation 4 Revealed

After years worth of near constant speculation from gamers the world over, Sony finally revealed the PlayStation in a glamorous Ne... ... n February 20th ... day mar... ... use Sony did som... ... one before ... th... ... ames and high lev... ... ole reveals consist of ... talking about just ... ... ving the stage to ... ... kers, but Sony's two ... ... as a cavalcade of

announcements to ... ... d best of all games, and we can shar... ... at with you today.

First though, let's get a few things out of the way — at the moment the PlayStation 4 doesn't have a price point. Sony glossed over that particular detail during the conference and only mentioned a target launch of "Holiday 2013" for the console. They also didn't actually show the console's form factor either, instead they focused on a new version of the DualShock controller (detailed below) and talked about the PlayStation

4's improved network infrastructure.

Most of the presentation talked about the power of social gaming, and how the PS4's considerable 8GBs worth of DDR5 memory along with 8 CPU cores would allow gamers to stream and record their gameplay sessions for publication online. Think of it as *Twitch* for the console generation, with these kinds of background processes only possible thanks to this new platform's substantial technological horsepower. Being able to pause sessions of gameplay was also mentioned, a bit like the *PSP*, with players able to

[...] PlayStation [...] the handheld pla[...] remote play device[...] games via the Vita th[...] streaming tech [...] functional[...] WiiU Gamepad.

The founder of Gaikai[...] out to talk about this implic[...]

NEW DUALSHOCK

Look at that nice and shiny Dualshock 4 controller. It's a bit chunkier than its predecessor but it boasts lots of fancy tech including new front facing touchpad, headphone jack, improved triggers for better feedback, a button to record gameplay footage and most curiously of all a light sensor at the back detectable by the also new and improved PlayStation Eye camera. Sony were coy on the details regarding how the camera would interact with the controller, but we suspect there's some low-level Move functionality built in – a bit like the Sixaxis we suspect. Whether games will use all of this new functionality remains to be seen, but if nothing else this controller looks slick.

tech. In addition to how players will be able to
sample demos from the PlayStation Store instantly
without having to with long down
waits. Mr Pe the bombshell
he Pla ort any kind of
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 sole, via game
 b having every game
 ming library available
 4's lifecycle, but we'll

On the games fro es were
revealed, a colourful thi action adventure
called Knack. Killzone: Shadow Fall, inFamous:
Second Son and Driveclub from the studio which
birthed Motorstorm. Now the latter two on that list
only had some brief concept footage to show
with Driveclub looking like a worthy rival to Sony's
own Gran Turismo series, whereas Sucker Punch's
next inFamous game emulates Marvel's Civil War
series with the premise involving superheroes
striking back against an oppressive government
regime. Ubisoft's open-world hacking game,

SYSTEM SPECS

The PlayStation 4 boasts an unprecedented 8GBs of
Ram and 8 CPU cores which equates to around 2
teraflops of computational performance. This console
is several times more powerful than the PlayStation 3,
and the extra grunt enables the new console to run a
lot of processes in the background without impacting
performance - such as the ability to download game
updates while playing said game and recording recent
gameplay easily. The abundant RAM stores also allow
save states to be stored to the memory, which means
that players can instantly recover their progress
despite their console entering a sleep state. This
hardware is impressive and probably expensive. We
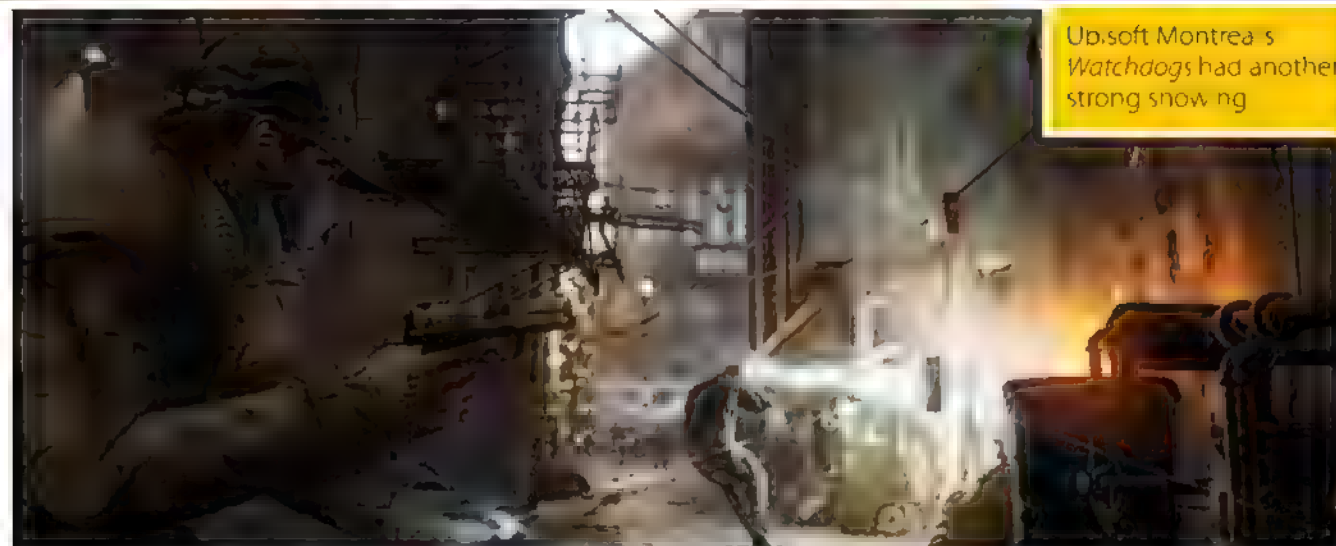think the PlayStation 4 will be priced at at least £400.
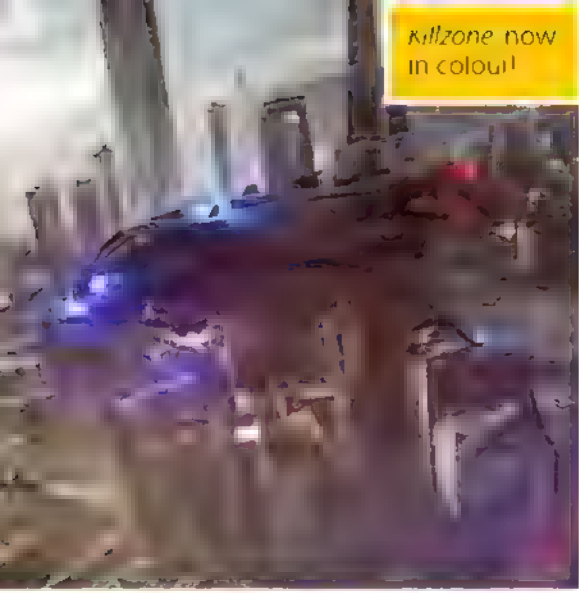
FirstLook | Preview
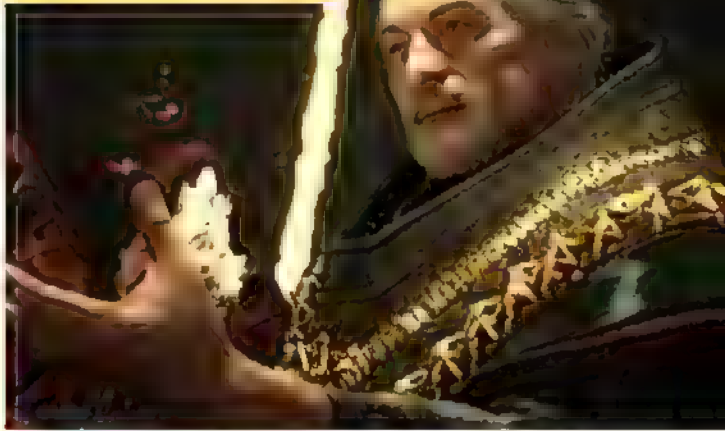
Watchdogs was also shown running in realtime on the PlayStation 4.

The star of the show in our minds was Killzone Shadow Fall thanks to its incredible visuals, weighty gunplay and surprisingly varied colour palette. Guerilla Games has a reputation for making bland, brown shooters with little character but seeing this series return with a futuristic idyllic version of Earth was a really nice surprise. The biggest surprise of the night came care of Blizzard though, who confirmed that Diablo III would be coming to not only PlayStation 4, but PlayStation 3 as well.

In addition to these new games a whole host of developers, including Braid's Jonathan Blow hit the stage to explain how the PlayStation 4 is apparently so easy to develop for thanks to its

... regarding the ... are instea ... which all develo ... of course, and we reserve judgement on this front until the launch line-up is announced.

As big reveal event ... outstanding, with not only ... functionality confirmed for t ... we would have liked to ha ... pricing and a launch date for Europe, but the Japanese technology speci ... something for the rest of ... events. Your move Microsoft ... is going to be very interesting...

Upcoming DLC & UGC

DMC: Virgil's Downfall

DLC

PUB: ⬛
DEV: ⬛
ETA: ⬛

If you are one of the learned, attractive and downright spectacular people who use PreOrder-IQ.com then you've probably already snapped up a version of *Devil May Cry* which comes with a code to download *Virgil's Downfall* when it's finally released on Xbox Live, PlayStation Network and Steam this February. If you didn't well, you'll know where to look next time.

Regardless if you've secured a download of this DLC or not, nobody outside Capcom has played *Virgil's Downfall* yet. This considerable content slice clocks in at around 3-5 hours and involves players assuming the role of Virgil, Dante's brother, as he seeks to undo the consequences of *Devil May Cry*'s stunning campaign finale. Expect new weapons, attack moves and combos as well as levels which are a bit more other-worldy than you'd expect. This is the kind of hefty DLC that we like to see. ■

BttF: Liberty City

UGC

DEV: Game⬛
ETA: ⬛

User-generated content or 'mods' which add the DeLorean are two-a-penny nowadays, but this is one of the few that have actually made their way to the public domain. Developed for use in the PC version of *GTA IV*, this mod features the DeLorean exactly as it appeared in *Back to the Future II*, with players able to initiate the time circuits, leave flame trails… you know, the whole nine yards!

You will need to jump through some considerable hoops to get this working including installing scripting tool – software and tutorials available from GTA4-mods.com. That said, in our opinion the effort is worth it if only to scratch that time-travelling itch, which if we're being honest, we all have. ■

Aliens: CM – Bughunt

DLC
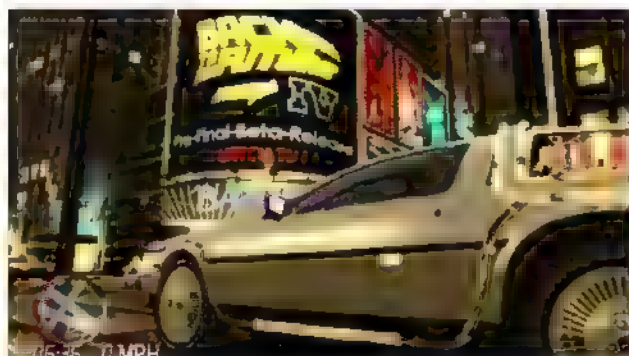
O h how we pity the unfortunate team that has to make DLC for a poorly received game. Imagine, if you will, pouring your heart and soul into a piece of content which you know in all probability will be ignored, thanks to poor reviews and general apathy from gamers towards that DLC's parent game at launch. That's the exact scenario Gearbox Software are currently facing with 2013's worst game release thus far, *Aliens: Colonial Marines*. According to reports, this ill-fated shooter will receive four different DLC drops by the end of the year, with the first being a multiplayer mode dubbed *Bughunt* which involves Marines

fighting off waves of increasingly tough enemies on three new maps. New story content has also been promised in further DLC packs. Will this content save what is otherwise a poor release? We doubt it. ■

Mafia: Titanic

UGC

O nly on PC do you get games still getting new content years after they first hit store shelves. Sure, the developers of *Mafia: The City of Lost Heaven*

have long since moved on, but that doesn't mean the game's community have. *Titanic* is just one of the mods still in development for the original *Mafia*, and even though around 70% of the infamous ship still has to be modelled, what has been done already looks really nice.

The two-man team behind the project aren't only working producing new assets though, they're also putting together a new standalone campaign featuring new characters, voice-actors and set pieces all taking place on the ill-fated British liner. Understandably for a project of this ambition no launch date's been confirmed, but we hope to see more soon. ■
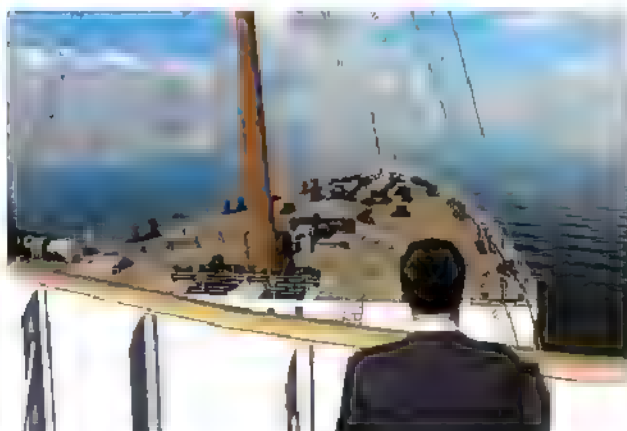
Chivalry: Medieval Warfare

DLC

Free DLC is becoming increasingly rare nowadays, but one place where the practice is still commonplace is the PC platform. Torn Banner Studios recently packaged together a giant patch for their multiplayer-only first-person medieval combat sim *Chivalry: Medieval War*, and it included 13 all-new maps, five new weapons, and three new game modes. All this content has just been released for free via a new content update, so how cool is that?

It's worth pointing out that for a multiplayer game these sorts of updates do inevitably create an upswing in the number of people playing on servers, and the fact that *Chivalry* is a PC-only game means that the developer doesn't have to stump up patching fees from platform holders, but still Torn Banner Studios deserve plenty of credit for doing right by their fans. ■

Dead Space 3: Awakened

DLC

If *Dead Space 3* wasn't quite as scary as you would've liked then you're in luck, as Visceral Games has announced that the forthcoming *Awakened* DLC will include, and we're quoting here, 'some of the most disturbing content ever seen in a *Dead Space* game', according to the boss of the developer behind the series, Steve Papoutsis. We still have the occasional nightmare about that scene in *Dead Space 2* where Isaac gets his eye penetrated by a steel surgical device, so if there's more of that in the DLC then we suppose that has to be a good thing, right?

In any case, more *Dead Space* can never be a bad thing and as long as Visceral stick more to the dark cerebral terror formula rather than the shooty combat angle, then this content should be worth playing. Nightmares be damned. ■

FUEL: Refueled

Mods that get completed and released into the public domain are rare; mods that are so popular that they continue to get tweaked post-launch are even rarer, and that's why we're giving *FUEL:*

Refueled a bit of extra attention. *FUEL* has to be one of the most tragically overlooked racing games of this generation, with its procedurally generated terrain and rather strange apocalyptic setting, but this mod unlocks some of that title's untapped potential with a hardcore mode, a greatly enhanced handling model and more open-world options for players to fool around with, including changing the day/night cycle, unlocking every car for use in freeroam and even adding new vehicles like hovercrafts and drag racers for use in all new race events. Find out more about *Refuelled* by visiting moddb.com. ◼

Vice City Stories: PC Edition

The world may currently be abuzz about *GTA V*'s release this September, but a group of talented modders are working hard to give us all the PC port of the PSP-exclusive *Vice City Stories* that, for one reason or another, Rockstar never delivered.

Vice City Stories used mostly the same assets of *GTA: Vice City*, but it did feature a whole new set of characters, a new protagonist and lots of well-performed dialogue. This mod will feature every mission, vehicle, area and NPC from the original PSP release, only at the higher resolutions PC owners would expect. Currently this mod is about 40% complete, and the five-man team behind it are apprehensive about talking

about a launch window. However, it seems as though a lot has been achieved already and they're constantly updating fans on their status via moddb.com. ◼

GEARS OF WAR: JUDGMENT

BIOSHOCK INFINITE

REMEMBER ME